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Sam Maduegbuna My Journal

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# Suit Claims Discrimination

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By TAMER EL-GHOBASHY

A supervisor with the Civilian Complaint Review Board is accusing a top official at the agency of racial discrimination that she claimed resulted in the supervisor being passed over for a promotion in favor of a white male colleague, according to a lawsuit filed in federal court in Manhattan.

In a complaint filed on Feb. 25, Winsome Thelwell, 50 years old, claims Laura Edidin, who was then the CCRB's deputy executive director of investigations, "branded" her as an "angry black woman" and sought to create the impression within CCRB that Ms. Thelwell is an "incompetent manager."

Through a spokeswoman for the CCRB, Ms. Edidin declined to comment on Tuesday. She is now the chief prosecutor in a newly created unit that will prosecute police officers accused of certain types of misconduct. That unit, lead by Ms. Edidin, a former federal prosecutor, was formally recognized on Tuesday.

Ms. Thelwell's lawsuit, which seeks damages and a court ordered promotion, also names New York City as a defendant. A spokeswoman for the city Law Department said it has received the case but couldn't comment because it is pending litigation.

According to the complaint, Ms. Thelwell is of Jamaican heritage and joined the CCRB in 1995 as an investigator. It said she had been steadily promoted under Ms. Edidin's predecessors. The complaint claims Ms. Thelwell had no disciplinary record at the agency in that time.

When Ms. Edidin became her supervisor in 2011, Ms. Thelwell claims she was undermined because of her race and her distinctive accent. She said Ms. Edidin created a position to elevate a white male with less experience than Ms. Thelwell had. The man succeeded Ms. Edidin in August 2012, the complaint alleges.

Through her attorney, Ms. Thelwell declined to comment.

The attorney, Samuel Maduegbuna, said: "The allegation is that [Ms. Edidin] has used a racial stereotype to undermine the elevation of Ms. Thelwell in the agency and of masterminding the advancement of a white male employee."

A version of this article appeared March 13, 2013, on page A20 in the U.S. edition of The Wall Street Journal, with the headline: Suit Claims Discrimination.

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